

Winter Spot for Snakes

Most of the snakes that occur across Wisconsin's landscape are harmless. They are a colorful, beneficial and fascinating group, playing a vital role in natural ecosystems, serving both as predators and prey. For five months of the year, the bitter cold and snow-cover in Wisconsin will keep most reptiles out of action. Winter length, temperatures, and habitat availability are the major limiting factors for snake distribution in Wisconsin.



By Rachel Samerdyke, Private Lands biologist

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has partnered with private landowners and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to install snake hibernacula. The snake hibernacula were constructed to provide a place for snakes to over-winter.

Construction begins by digging a hole approximately 6- to 8-feet deep and 10 feet square in size. Large rocks are placed at the bottom of the hole to create crevices that the snakes can utilize. Several pieces of flexible drain pipe are placed among the rocks

within the structure providing an entrance. The pipes also had 1-inch holes cut into the sides along the entire length of the pipe to provide snakes multi-level access. More large rocks and small logs are carefully placed and piled creating a multi-layered shelter.



Smaller rock rubble is then piled on top and a piece of filter fabric is laid over the structure. The fabric is covered with approximately 2-3 inches of sand and dirt while leaving the ends of the flexible pipes uncovered.



Native seed was collected from the adjacent prairie and spread on disturbed area. The landowner placed large rocks around the entrance tubes to provide a more natural looking site.

